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SUBJECT: UN/1267 SANCTIONS: RUSSIANS UNYIELDING ON REMOVING
HOLDS ON AFGHAN DE-LISTING REQUESTS

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JACKIE WOLCOTT, FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

11. (C) SUMMARY: Belgian PermRep and Chairman of the 1267 (Taliban/Al-Qaida) Sanctions Committee Johan Verbeke convened P-5 ambassadors plus Afghanistan on November 8 to discuss the outstanding Afghan requests to remove from the 1267 sanctions list twenty individuals who have renounced their ties to the Taliban and participated in national reconciliation. Though all P-5 members were present, Verbeke used the meeting to press Russia, the only delegation with substantive objections to all of the requests, to remove its holds, which are an impediment to the Council's goal of updating the Taliban section of the list. Russian DPR Dolgov argued that Moscow had not been able to corroborate the GOA'S claims that the individuals in question had severed their ties to terrorism, and stated that absent specific proof of this fact the Russian delegation would maintain its hold--blocking action on the Afghan requests. Dolgov stressed that Moscow would consider new evidence in support of the requests, and when pressed by USUN Ambassador Wolcott on how the Committee could move forward, he encouraged delegations to share with Russia the evidence that permitted them to lift their holds. End summary.

BACKGROUND

12. (C) Recognizing that the 1267 sanctions list (the list of members of the Taliban and al-Qaida subject to sanctions), established in 1999 had not evolved in parallel with the changing terrorist threat and political developments in Afghanistan, in resolution 1735 (2006) the Council called on the Committee to update the list, and in particular the Taliban section of the list. In light of this, the Belgians have pressed the Committee to act on a request of the Government of Afghanistan, dating back to November 2005, to de-list twenty former Taliban who have participated in national reconciliation. In November of this year the US and UK lifted their holds on the nine names (of the original twenty) that the Afghans had identified as a priority (and France is completing its vetting of its four remaining holds on those names), but Russia has not, impeding the goal laid out in resolution 1735 of maintaining a credible and relevant sanctions list.

1267 CHAIRMAN PRESSES FOR ACTION ON DE-LISTING REQUESTS

¶3. (C) Belgian PermRep and Chairman of the 1267 Committee Johan Verbeke convened P-5 ambassadors and PermRep Zahir Tanin of Afghanistan on November 8 to discuss the holds on the Afghan de-listing requests. (Note: The Belgians made clear to USUN that they intended to use this meeting to press for Russian action on its holds. End note.) USUN Ambassador Wolcott, Russian DPR Konstantin Dolgov, UK PermRep John Sawers, French DPR Jean-Pierre Lacroix, and Chinese DPR Liu Zhenmin attended the meeting at the Belgian Mission with Ambassadors Verbeke and Tanin.

¶4. (C) Ambassador Verbeke opened the meeting with general comments, stressing that the credibility of the list depended on its accuracy and noting a clear divergence between the current terrorist threat and the names on the list. New listings and de-listings would signal greater toughness against terrorism on the Committee's part, Verbeke argued, and would mitigate the perception that sanctioned individuals are listed forever, thereby encouraging states to submit new names for sanctions.

¶5. (C) Ambassador Verbeke then gave the floor to Ambassador Tanin, who stated that the 1267 sanctions regime worked in support of the international community's two goals in Afghanistan: denying sanctuary to terrorists, and establishing a safe and stable state that posed no threat to its neighbors. However, in the GOA's view, the Committee undermined the credibility of the list by failing to end sanctions on those who had participated in national reconciliation, citing the case of Governor Monib as an example and noting Kabul's frustration on this score. Tanin added that a &depoliticized technical discussion8 of the GOA requests would help to ease this frustration.

RUSSIA FIRM ON MAINTAINING HOLDS

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¶6. (C) DPR Dolgov noted that there was consensus on the need to revitalize the list and improve its relevance. Updating the Taliban section of the list had a &high profile8 in Moscow's interagency process, and the recent attacks in Baghlan underscored the persistent threat of terrorism in Afghanistan. However, Dolgov argued, Moscow had not seen specific evidence that these individuals had severed their ties to terrorism, without which the Russian interagency would not move forward. Nor was participation in national reconciliation sufficient reason for Moscow to support delisting. Dolgov added that some of these individuals had Russian bank accounts, and Moscow needed a guarantee that once unfrozen those funds would not be used for terrorism.

¶7. (C) Dolgov further argued that credibility &worked two ways,8 and that the hasty de-listing of persons who would reengage in terrorism would put the reputation of the Council on the line. Responding to Tanin's mention of Governor Monib, Dolgov observed that certain listed persons in Afghanistan travel and participate in high-visibility activities such as political campaigns, and inquired how, if their assets were frozen, these people were funding their activities. However, Dolgov stated more than once that Russia was open to considering further information on the GOA de-listing requests.

USUN, UK, AND FRANCE SEEK WAY TO MOVE FORWARD

¶8. (C) USUN Ambassador Jackie Wolcott underlined the Council's concern that 1267 sanctions remain credible, and noted that without forward movement the list would cease to be a useful tool in the international fight against terrorism. Ambassador Wolcott added that the USG also had a complex interagency process for vetting changes to the list, but that we understood the necessity of ensuring that the list evolved to match the changing threat. Recalling that

the Council recently passed resolution 1735, whose purpose was to update the list, Ambassador Wolcott asked Ambassador Dolgov how specifically the Committee could move forward on these requests. Dolgov responded by encouraging the delegations that recently lifted their holds to share with Russia the evidence supporting their decisions.

¶9. (C) UK Ambassador Sawers stated that he would press London for further action on the Taliban section of the list, but suggested that, in the absence of compelling reasons to deny GOA requests, the Committee should approach future Afghan requests on the principle of responsiveness. Sawers added that Moscow should not employ a higher burden of proof for de-listing than for listing, and suggested that the Committee could consider a joint listing/de-listing package. French DPR Lacroix emphasized his government's concern with ensuring that the list reflected reality and that it took into account Afghan national reconciliation. Chinese DPR Liu Zhenmin stated that China &generally supported the gradual improvement of the list,⁸ but argued that the concerns of all Committee members should be considered. Liu advocated an approach that took the following into consideration: 1) the concerns of the country involved, 2) facts and evidence, and 3) the gradual reduction of sanctions measures.

COMMENT

¶10. (C) While underlining Russian agreement that the list must be updated, Russian DPR Dolgov was clear that absent new information on the GOA de-listing requests Moscow would not lift its holds. While Ambassador Verbeke did not pursue the UK suggestion that the Committee consider a listing/de-listing package, USUN will raise the possibility with the Russian delegation. USUN recommends that, if possible, Washington share with the Russians evidence in support of the USG decision to lift our holds on the GOA de-listing requests in order to facilitate further progress on updating the Taliban section of the list in the Committee. Khalilzad